

THE ROOT THAT BEARS WORMWOOD

NO. 723

A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood.”
Deuteronomy 29:18.

THE people of Israel, after all the wonderful things which God had done for them, should have felt themselves bound forever to their father's God. They had received the clearest possible proof that Jehovah alone was the living and true God. How could they debase themselves to worship graven images when they had seen such signs and wonders worked by their great I AM? Surely idolatry after such a history as theirs must have been sinful to the worst degree. They were, however, in great danger from two or three circumstances which in the chapter before us are set before them as a ground of caution. “You know how you dwelt in the land of Egypt,” is the first caution. They had dwelt so long in the midst of the idolatrous Egyptians, that it would have been strange if they had not become tinctured with the idolatrous spirit which was so powerful in the land of Ham. Alas, Israel's hosts drank deep into Egypt's superstitions, and not long had they been in the wilderness before they made a golden ox, contemptuously called by Moses a golden calf, in imitation of the ox so solemnly adored in Egypt. Probably the mixed multitude never wholly ceased from idol-worship, for we find it said in Amos, “Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves.”

The Egyptians were infamous among all nations as almost indiscriminate worshippers of innumerable objects. They not only worshipped beasts, comely in proportion and useful to men, but they bowed down before the snake and the crocodile, and worshipped the beetle that is engendered from filth and the frog that comes up from the slime. “Oh, happy nation,” says one of the old satirists, “whose gods grow in their own gardens,” for they actually bowed down before onions and leeks, as though these were the gods that made heaven and earth! Knowing as we do that depraved nature is so strongly inclined to worship visible objects, we do not wonder that the disease of Egyptian idolatry infected the children of Israel.

Remember again, that in passing through the wilderness, all the people that Israel came in contact with for 40 years were idolaters. With the exception of Moses' father-in-law, who may have been a priest of God, a spiritual worshipper, it does not appear that there were any tribes on the face of the earth that worshipped the Most High. When the children of Israel passed by Moab or Edom, or when they came into contact with the subjects of Sihon or Og, they found them all prostrate in the same reverence of idols, bowing down before abominations, idols of wood and silver and gold. We are all too much affected by our surroundings; the imitative faculty is very forcible, especially in a direction pleasing to our fallen nature; and when these people found themselves to be singular and alone, worshipping God whom they could not see, while their neighbors practiced gorgeous rites and mystic ceremonies, it is no wonder that they were strongly tempted to set up idols. Yet further, when they had passed through the 40 years in the wilderness, what kind of country were they to enter into? Not a land in which there was a temple to Jehovah, and where the inhabitants would all assist them in cultivating the worship of the only true God, but a land that was full of idols, where every green hill was consecrated to a false deity, where the stones of the valley were piled up into a thousand altars, where every city had its own peculiar deity;

the country was full of temptations to allure them from allegiance to the true God. Israel should have been faithful under every test, but he who knows what is in man will perceive the need of the heavenly caution and of the warning of our text by which the Lord assured His people that to rebel against Him would be to plant a root that bears gall and wormwood.

Let us apply their history to ourselves. Remember the Egypt out of which we have been redeemed by mighty grace! Remember the sins which once had the mastery over us! Do we wear no relics of our bondage? Is it so easy to shake off old habits? Is there no hankering after the flesh pots of worldly pleasure? I am sure we have to admit before the Lord's people that we are in very great danger from our former habits, and that the twitching of the old Adam are not things to be laughed at. Would not our evil hearts soon lead us back to our old slavery if the grace of God did not prevent it? Look, moreover, at the people among whom we dwell. Is this vain world a friend to divine grace? Do you not, on the contrary, find it to be your perpetual foe? Why, you cannot go out into your trade, or follow your occupation, no, worse, you cannot even tarry at home without meeting with temptations. This world does not worship the true God; it bows down before gods of its own choosing; they may not be of wood or stone, but they are nonetheless dangerous. Men say unto their lusts or to their pleasures, to their persons, their intellects, their gains, "These are our gods; these are the pursuits which we count worthy of our immortal minds."

Are not believers tempted to follow the same ends and objects? Does not our personal advantage frequently aim at the throne of our hearts? Do we never find our losses, or our gains, endeavoring to thrust Jehovah from the rightful dominion of our souls? I am sure, brothers and sisters, from the oldest to the youngest; we all feel we are in peculiar danger from the people among whom we dwell. And will it be any better in the future? Have we any reason to expect that the places to which we shall journey between this and the hour of death will be any less full of temptation? May we not expect that as it has been, so it will be even till the end comes? May we not have to meet with temptations even more severe than those which we have encountered? May not the providence of God call us into circumstances where we will pass through severer tests, and our piety have to endure yet heavier trials? It is probable it will be so. Until we reach our home in glory, we shall have need to be often warned and put on our guard lest our evil hearts of unbelief should depart from the living God, and we should become as the rest of mankind are, a people who forget God, and that offer themselves unto strange lords, and follow their own devices.

These were the Lord's reasons for warning, and these are my motives this day for reminding you that sin is an evil and ruinous thing, "a root that bears gall or hemlock, and wormwood."

Sin, in the text, is styled a root that produces bitterness. This is our main thought this morning. If we have time *we shall institute the inquiry as to whether that root is in our hearts*, and then, thirdly, *we shall show the way of deliverance from the root and from its fruit.*

I. SIN IS THE ROOT WHICH BEARS GALL AND WORMWOOD. *That this was true in the case of the Israelites is very manifest.* Their history tells us the whole generation which came up out of Egypt died in the wilderness because of their sins. Their sin then was a root which bore to them the poisonous hemlock, for they left a line of graves along their line of march as a sad memorial of their iniquities, and only Joshua and Caleb ever entered into the promised land. At terrible intervals their sins bore fearful fruit for them. Sometimes the fiery serpents bit them; at other times the plague broke forth among the people, or the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the rebellious. We find them put to rout because of their sin at Ai although they had been victorious at Jericho, for Achan had hidden in his camp the accursed thing which was a root that bore to his nation wormwood and gall. After Israel had driven out the heathen nations they gave way to many forms of idolatry, and their land was invaded, and they were enslaved or driven into holes and dens; famine devastated the land, and pestilence laid it waste till the repenting people cried unto God in the bitterness of their sorrows, and He raised them up a Jephthah, or a Gideon, a Samson or a Barak, but on each occasion the mother of their sorrow was their sin, and the cause of their lamentation was their turning aside from their God. Then came the days of the kings of Israel, when the people for awhile feared the Lord, but at length the heart of the people went aside to the

calves of Bethel and they were given over to Assyria, and carried away captive after being struck in innumerable battles and reduced to be the lowest of nations. Then remember what became of Judah, which was for a time faithful to God. The eyes of their king were put out and they were driven into cruel bondage far away from their much-loved land, having before their captivity been subject to sieges and famine so terrible that it is said that the woman who was tender and delicate among them did eat her own children by reason of the terribleness of the siege. After the Lord had pardoned them and brought them back again and given them a name once more among the nations, they revolted from Him again, they smote His only-begotten and crucified the Lord of glory. And what did He do to them? It shall make both the ears of him who hears it tingle to read the story of the siege of Jerusalem written by one of themselves—Josephus. They were crucified till men lacked wood on which to crucify them; they were sold as slaves till men would not buy them at the price of one farthing each, for Jewish slaves had become so common and were so despised; the plowshare was driven over the very site of Jerusalem, and a mandate made that the Jew should never look towards that city. They were scattered and banished as they are unto this day. Truly the whole house of Israel is God's witness at this day that sin against Jehovah is a root that bears gall and wormwood.

As it was in their case we may rest assured it is in other cases, for God makes no exceptions in His dealings. He is not a judge who punishes one sin and allows another to go unpunished, for He deals equal justice to all men. If He spared not Israel, how shall He spare the Gentiles? If Jerusalem escaped not, how shall London escape? If He gave up to the spoiler and to the sword the seed of Abraham His friend, how shall He spare us in the day of His visitation, if we sin against Him?

Again, dear friends, not only does the history of the Jews prove that sin is a root of bitterness, but our judgment tells us that it is most fitting it should be so. If sin were in the long run pleasurable, and really produced advantage to man, it would be a very strange arrangement in the divine economy. The Judge of all the earth must do right, but would it be right that sinning should be rewarded with blessedness? If the root of sin, instead of bearing gall and wormwood, dropped with honey and streamed with milk, where would be the holiness of the great Governor who so ordained it? I would even venture to put this to the depraved intellect of those men who rail at divine justice; I would ask them what they would have? Would they have sin rewarded? Would they have virtue punished? If so, would not the devil be the most fitting ruler of such a dispensation? What sort of God could He be who would make holiness to bring forth misery, and sin to be the perpetual spring of delight? If any one of us, not absolutely mad, could be put into the position of the governor of the world, as soon as we had made laws, would we not at once decree that the violation of law should involve punishment? Why whenever savages become semi-civilized and form themselves into a little state, one of the first things they do is, having made laws, to lay down penalties for the breach of those laws, and men cannot form a government without penal sanctions. I will defy men to do so. If they will reward the breach of their laws and punish those who keep them, it will not be long before a general revolt and universal mutiny will give the law to the winds. It was right then, and according to the natural order of things, that rebellion against the law of the great moral Governor should, in the long run, if not at once, involve sorrow and misery.

This truth of God is continually being denied, and yet is all but self-evident. As, I believe, this is the point of teaching which is just now more assailed than any other, namely, the doctrine of the future punishment of sin; I find it is become quite a popular thing to assert that we who preach of hell and everlasting punishment libel the character of God; as it is constantly asserted that this doctrine is an old worn-out dogma, we beg to bring it before you once again as being, notwithstanding all the gainsayer may say, the truth of God. Let no man deceive himself and think that sin will go unpunished. Let no man, be his speech ever so sounding true, but in reality a lie, and his words ever so flattering, lead you to imagine that in the next world God will pass by iniquity, for, as surely as this Book is His word, sin is a most fearful evil, and the wrath to come will be terrible—so terrible that the hardest language ever used

by the most vehement speaker falls infinitely short of what the judgment of God will be when His wrath smokes against the sinner, and His curse descends with full force upon the offender.

Sin is a root which has not always budded and blossomed in this life, but which will bud and blossom and bring forth its fruit in the life to come, and the fruit of sin will be bitterer than hemlock and wormwood. I gather this, first, *from my reason*. Let an intelligent person only think a minute, and I am sure he will be convinced that there must be a terrible punishment for sin. Remember, *there are other laws in the world besides moral laws*—there is what is called by the philosopher physical laws, that is to say, laws which concern matter rather than mind. Now, if men break *these* laws, *does any ill result follow from the violation?* For instance, the law of attraction, or gravitation; that certain bodies shall attract other bodies, can that be infringed without risk? Here is a man who says he does not believe in gravitation; he does not believe, for instance, standing here on this lofty rock that he shall fall if he springs off into the air. He declares that he means to try the issue with that antiquated old law, and he laughs at Sir Isaac Newton, and everybody else. He says, “I am not to be bound by such a bugbear as this law of gravitation; I am a freethinker, and am not to be led by the nose by your physical creeds.” We warn him, “You will break your neck if you do.” He says, “Do you mean to represent God to me as such a being, that if I merely violate one of His laws He will actually put me to pain or even kill me? Do not tell me, I know better, and am not to be trammeled by the superstitions of the dark ages.” Yet let him say what he will, his leap will be fatal, and his life will pay the penalty of his rashness. If you rebel against gravitation it will crush you up as a man would a beetle, or a fly, and without a particle of pity will avenge its insulted authority. See the fool leap from the lofty crag into the air! Ah, unhappy wretch, there is no escape for him! Notwithstanding his religious belief that he would escape, we find him a mangled corpse at the bottom. The physical laws of God do not stay their action on account of the men who break them, but push on to their purposed end; let the results be what they may. Take another case. It is a law of nature that filthiness shall beget disease. Over yonder a number of persons herd together in impure air; they never clean their bodies, or wash their clothes, they leave heaps of filth to rot outside the door, drainage is neglected, water is scarce and poisonous; the Sanitary Commissioner warns them—“My dear good people, if you do not alter this, you will have the fever or the cholera.” “What? Do you believe,” says a woman, “that God Almighty is so cruel that He will take away this dear little child from my bosom just because we do not happen to wash ourselves, but prefer to live in dirt and drunkenness?” “Yes,” says the Sanitary Commissioner, “whatever you may think of it, that is the fact, that filth and vice will bring disease” “Well,” says some babbling freethinker, “it is a very shocking doctrine—you slander God—I do not believe it!” Yet the Lord did permit the plague a few weeks ago, right and left, to slay its thousands. Who says it is a cruel decree, that foul air should make men sick? Nobody complains of the cruelty of God in His physical laws, although if men set themselves against them there is no sort of pity for them—the physical law goes on and stamps out all rebels against its power. Go to sea in a leaky ship, and see if when the storm comes the sea does not swallow you up without an atom of pity. Or stand under a tree when lightning is abroad, and if the lightning strikes that tree and you are under it, see if the lightning will care for you. You have violated the physical law—you may have done it ignorantly, but it has no pity, but just smites with all its force.

Now I say if this is a fact, which nobody can dispute, that the God of nature is a terrible God, oh you who worship the God of nature and say you do not care for the God of revelation, I ask you what you make of all this? I ask you whether even nature itself does not say to you, “If God so terribly avenges His ordinary physical laws when they are broken, how much more surely will He avenge His *moral* laws when men wantonly and wickedly throw themselves in their way”?

Again, we are not left to this argument alone, for *there is one out of the Ten Commandments*, to which I can only allude, *which involves more especially the bodies of men*. Now, when a man offends against the one command, we shall see if God does really punish sin; we shall see in the man’s body whether or not sin does produce gall or wormwood. I allude, of course, to the command, “You shall not commit adultery,” which forbids all classes of lasciviousness and uncleanness. No sooner is this law

broken in any case than straightway man receives the recompense which is meet. The men or women who violate this precept soon find that they have not only done wrong to God but wrong to themselves. Our hospitals and asylums could tell you into what a fearful state men have brought themselves by sins of the flesh; states of body and mind so terrible that the very phrases in which Scripture speaks of future misery might, without exaggeration, be used in describing them. This is rather the physician's business than mine, but if this were the fit place and the fit time I could prove it, so that your very hair might stand on end. God forbid that any of you should prove in yourselves the misery which this sin brings even on earth! Now, if the violation of this one command which happens to touch the body, does, beyond all doubt, make men smart for it, if this one set of sins makes him feel that sin is as poison to the blood and the bones, if such is the case with one commandment, why not with the rest? And as the other commands, for the most part, do not seem to bring upon us a punishment here, it is rational to believe that they will bring it upon us in the next state, and as this is a state in which the body evidently suffers from the breach of one command, it is natural to expect that in the next state the body and soul will suffer for the breach of the other nine. I believe that every sin creates disease in the soul, that every sinful thought, and word, and deed poisons our spiritual nature; that sin is to be dreaded not merely because *God* will smite us, but because *sin itself* will plague us. If a man cuts himself he expects to bleed, and if a man sins he is wounding his soul, and his soul *must* bleed. If a man drinks poison, he must expect to have it lying in the system if it does not kill him outright, and if a man takes sin into his spirit it lies rankling within. This root will bear hemlock and gall, if not in this life yet in the life to come.

Still further, to bring out this argument; we have no reason to believe that death will change the character of man at all. I have no reason to believe that my dying, if I am a sinner, will make a saint of me. I certainly can have no thought that if I die as a saint death will make a sinner of me. A man might as well believe the one as the other, and they are both irrational. Death says, "He who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." Then, a man dying as a sinner, when he gets into the next world, what will he do? Why, he will sin as he did here—not in the same shape, and way, but he will in some way go on sinning; he will die a sinner, raise a sinner, live a sinner, and forever live a sinner. Now, if he forever lives as a sinner, he will continue to get worse and worse in sin, for we all know that it is the nature of sin to grow worse, and sin has a self-developing power within itself. Now, if in the other life the man goes on sinning worse and worse, and even in this life we have many instances that sin brings misery, may we not rationally conclude from the Bible that increasing sin in the next life will bring forth increasing misery, which will be intolerable beyond all conception? I tremble as I see the drift of this line of thought; may you tremble, too, and fly to the Lord Jesus for pardon! Depend upon it, as long as a man goes on sinning the law will necessitate that he shall be miserable. He is out of accord with the great moral forces, and he must as surely suffer as another man would do who perished in fighting with gravitation or any other physical law. "Oh," cries one, "that is not the doctrine we kick against, we speak against *God's* punishing sin!" But what if this should be the way in which sin is punished? What if it is written, "Evil shall slay the wicked." "You have destroyed yourself." If this is the way in which God punishes sin, even you who sin are compelled to say that it is right. Did anybody ever think it wrong that if a man tried to float upon a stone he should drown? Everybody says, "Why does the fool attempt it? It is a law of nature that the stone should sink, why does he kick against it?" Nobody thinks it cruel that he should drown if he ties a millstone to his neck and leaps into the sea. If a man thrusts his hand in the fire, nobody thinks it cruel on God's part if that man's hand is burned. Now, the natural effect of the violation of a divine command is misery. Oh that men would believe it, and cast out the root which produces wormwood!

But we are not, happily, left to our reason about it; *we can turn to the Book of God, and call up the witnesses*. Ask Noah, as he looks out of his ark, "Does sin bring bitterness?" And he points to the floating carcasses of innumerable thousands that died because of sin. Turn to Abraham—does sin bear bitterness? He points to the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah that God destroyed because of their

wickedness. Ask Moses, and he reminds you of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who were swallowed up alive. Turn to Paul, and you do not find Paul speaking with the honeyed phrases of these modern deceivers who would make people believe that sin will not be punished! He says, "He who despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorcer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trod underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Listen to James or Jude, or Peter, and you hear them speak of chains of darkness and flaming fire. Hear John as he writes of the wrath of God and of the winepress of it, out of which the blood flows up to the horse's bridles. Let the Savior Himself speak to you. He cries, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." He is the author of those words, "Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." It is He who speaks of the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. This book is as opposite as light to darkness to the mawkish softness of modern heretical divinity which drivels against the just judgment of God. It tells you, (and oh that you might hear it as God's own voice to you!)—it tells you not that sin will end in pleasure and joy, but that the wrath of God will abide upon you if you do not turn from sin; that the soul that sins, it shall die; that God's curse is upon the wicked, and that everlasting punishment is the portion of the impenitent. Dreadful as that truth of God is, it is clearly revealed, and let it be received and trembled at!

Once again, whereas right reason shows it and Scripture confirms it, I believe that *conscience in every enlightened man asserts it*. I read the other day, in a lecture against this doctrine, that Augustine was the author of the doctrine of eternal punishment. It was a great piece of news, certainly; but we are further told that it was because he had been a great sinner, and therefore he felt such horror of conscience on account of sin that his mind was morbid, and he fancied that he deserved eternal punishment. Well, then, here I stand in the same position as Augustine, having been a great sinner too; and because of my great conviction of sin I also feel that sin deserves eternal punishment. And, dear friends, I do not believe the witness of Augustine is at all weakened by his having had a clear sense of sin; on the contrary, I accept him as all the better witness because, having known what sin meant, and having felt its weight in his own conscience, he was better able to judge what sin deserved. It is strange that men should assert that because the man felt a great horror of sin, therefore he misjudged its desert. That would be the very reason why he should judge correctly, and if the gentlemen who oppose this doctrine had any true sense of sin themselves, they would soon change their present views. When my heart was awakened to feel the guilt of sin, I never quarreled with God upon the matter of punishment. I felt that, let God do what He will with me on account of sin, I deserved it all—I was compelled to bow my head, and not so much as lift my eyes to the place where He dwelt; but could simply say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I had no thought to plead in court against the divine Sentence; I agreed to it. But if there is a man before me who says that the wrath of God is too heavy a punishment for his little sin, I ask him, if the sin is little, why does he not give it up? If it is such a little pleasure to you, why not renounce it? A gentleman, a man of wealth, who is now dead, as I one day walked with him in his garden, took me by the button-hole and said, "What an awful thing, sir, that I should fling my soul away for the sake of a little worldly mirth when I know that I shall have to smart in hell for it forever!" He looked me through and through as he spoke to me, but after we had prayed together, and I had laid before him the way of salvation, I was pained to see that he had made his choice for the pleasures of sin. When a man deliberately does that, what can you say but that he must take his choice? If you know that hell is so dreadful, and you pretend that your sin is so little, why do you choose your sin? Why do you not renounce it? I will take you on your own footing. You say the punishment is too severe for so small a pleasure; then why do you take the pleasure? The more terrible the punishment is, the more foolish is it on your part to run the risk of it for the sake of such a paltry gain. Sinner, I charge you by the terrors of hell, do not buy sin at such a fearful price, but rather say, "I cannot sell my soul so cheaply; I must have something better than the gaiety of life to reward me for being cast away forever."

I put it yet again. The plan of salvation by Jesus Christ is very clear and very plain. It is, "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Oftentimes our hearers say, "Oh it is so easy, so very simple—nothing to do but just trust in Christ." My dear hearer, if it is so simple, why not receive it?—

*"How they deserve the deepest hell
That slight these joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel
That break these bonds of love!"*

If to trust in Christ is so simple, how can you refuse to believe in Him? Why will you live an unbeliever when God Himself has said, "He who believes not shall be *damned*"? Oh, fly from unbelief, which is the root that bears gall and wormwood.

II. I must be very brief on the other two heads. IS THERE SUCH A ROOT AS THIS GROWING IN THE HEART OF ANY ONE OF US HERE? I am afraid there is; because upon looking at the text it appears that some have this root that will bear gall and wormwood in them who are not actually gross outward sinners—they are described as those who forget God. The verse from which the text is taken says of them, "whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God." Is there no heart here that is turned away from God? Very personally do I put this question to you all: are you all followers of God? If your heart does not love God, the non-loving of God is that root which will bear for you the anguish of hell. The non-loving of the Most High, even though you never curse or swear, even though you do not break the Sabbath, is that root that will bear gall and wormwood. Next we read of "men seeking after another god." Are you loving someone more than God? Are you living for money—is that your great objective? Are you seeking fame? Whatever it is to which you give your whole life that is your god. Is there no one here who is living for self? If so, though you may be outwardly most respectable people, if you are living for anything but God, that root will bring forth gall and wormwood. Ah, my dear hearers, I feel as if my eyes would burst into weeping while I am talking to you. My head aches, my heart is burning as I think how many there are of you who are in this state. You are living for that which will bring forth to you the wrath to come. Do think of this. If I tell you what is not true reject it, but as God, my Master, has put it into my heart to speak it to you, take warning. Again, this root is in every man who *disbelieves the penalty of sin*. The verse following the text speaks of one who said, "I shall have peace though I walk after my own heart." Are you saying that? If so, you have the evil root in your heart. There is no more sure sign of reprobation than callousness and carelessness, and if you are saying this morning, "Well, I will try it; I will have the pleasures of sin and will run all risks," then *you* are the person. I do not say that the root has blossomed yet, but you have it within, and as surely as God's Word is true, if you die in such a state, you shall forever know that this root produces nothing but gall and wormwood.

III. The last point was to be, HOW ARE WE TO GET RID OF IT? Is there a possibility of being delivered from the gall and wormwood? There is. As many as trust in Christ shall be rid of the gall and wormwood. How? Shall it be poured on the ground, so that you shall not drink it? No, it must be drunk; all the bitter results of sin must be endured. Sin produces hell, and that hell must be endured; but listen, Christ has drunk the gall and wormwood for every soul that trusts Him. He has drunk the gall and wormwood for you, if you trust Him now. Come and rest upon my Master, and you shall find that there is not a drop of gall nor wormwood left for you, for in the garden and on the bloody tree Christ endured what you ought to have endured, and felt the full results of sin in His own person which otherwise you must have felt. "Well," you say, "thank God for that, but how can I cut up the root itself?" In order to escape the punishment of sin you must be saved from sin itself, and the way to it is this, you must deeply feel in your own soul that sin is a bitter thing. If you do not feel and acknowledge this you will never find mercy. My dear hearer, if sin is a sweet morsel in your mouth, it will be bitter in your heart forever; and as long as you love sin you cannot love God. You must go to God and pray, "Lord, tear these sins out of me—do not leave one, neither a little or a great one." Mark me, you may talk what you will about believing in Christ, but if you love sin you will suffer for sin. Now, lay bare your heart before the

Eternal One, and say, “O God, You see my sins, You see the evil I did love, I hate it now, Lord, help me to overcome it; let me not be the victim of my sins—

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your throne,
And worship only Thee.’*

As for the past, wash me in the blood of Your dear Son; as for the present, send Your Spirit down to write Your law upon my heart.”

I did want this morning to have pleaded with sinners; I had it in my heart to have put before you the blessing and the curse, and then to have said, “By God’s grace lay hold on eternal life, and let your sins go. Trust Jesus, and let the pleasures of the world go.” But if I cannot plead with you, I will ask God the Holy Spirit to plead with your consciences afterwards. Sin cannot bring you pleasure. It cannot profit you in the long run. You may get a little money or pleasure now, but you will lose by it in the long run of eternity. If your existence were only on earth, I believe your happiness would be greatest by being a Christian, but this world is only the first step or two in a race that never has an end. May God the Holy Spirit influence your will that you may choose that which will endure, and not that which will be buried in the tomb. Oh by the frail character of life, by the certainty of death, by the judgment of God, by His hatred of sin, by the flames that know no abatement though briny tears forever flow, fly away to Christ. Oh may you fly to Him now and find life in His death, healing in His wounds, and everlasting mercy through His merits.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—DEUTERONOMY 29.

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